

Jack of Diamonds

by  
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(Based on the events of the Wham Paymaster Robbery of 1889)

Revisions by  
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EXT. BLOODY RUN - NIGHT

A campfire glows in the middle of the southwestern U.S. wilderness, surrounded by thin brush and bordered on one side by a steep ridge of rocks. Closer in, the wild shadows thrown by the fire cover and reveal again a sparse, twinkling carpet of spent cartridge shells, the silhouette of an empty army wagon against a sky full of stars, the corpses of three dead mules, a shattered strongbox, and two very still human shapes.

FRANKIE, a black woman in her thirties, is crouching over the blanketed, sweating figure of Sergeant BROWN, lying flat next to a rifle in a dirty buffalo soldier uniform. He winces as she pulls the blanket back to reveal bloody bandages underneath slashed parts of his uniform - on his arm and side - and applies gentle pressure to one of them.

FRANKIE

...I should have listened to that Mexican and stayed behind. He told me it wasn't safe and to ride back and cross my heart if he wasn't right. Cross my heart.

BROWN

Now, what would I have done if you weren't here to doctor me up?

FRANKIE

(ignoring the question)  
...cross my heart, but I never had a day like that in my life. I thought I knew a soldier's life - I gone and got married to one for sure, but getting thrown in jail, and shot at, and God knows what else (God knows), I don't know half how hard it is for you..

BROWN

No need to pick that old sore open again.

After a pause, Frankie finds a place to sit across from Brown.

FRANKIE

When I was hiding out in those rocks I heard one of them say it was a real shame they're gonna have to kill miss Frankie, they said. Can you believe it? A "real shame" they'd have to kill me!

BROWN

And a real shame it would have been, too. But look over there, love. Those stains on the rock aren't ours. We didn't give them the chance.

FRANKIE

Now don't you get all puffed up. I didn't see a single fellow get shot half so good as you did, though I thought one got his hand shot, I saw.

BROWN

Hard to tell when they were up that ridge, and jumping around like that, and gunsmoke, but I reckon you're right. It would've taken more than thirteen of us to hold this pass.

FRANKIE

They'll remember it for a while yet, I suppose. When the law catches them, they'll remember it. I got a good at look at some of 'em close. I'll never forget the one. Stood five foot six on one side and six foot on the other. I could recognize him a mile off with a limp that mighty.

The sound of a wagon and horses gradually fills the campsite. Brown fingers his rifle.

BROWN

Sounds like you might have to, honey.

The wagon (an ambulance) stops just inside the firelight.

THOMAS LEBO, a smartly dressed military captain, dismounts from the front with a PHYSICIAN who rushes to BROWN's side with a medical bag. A few soldiers follow from the carriage with a stretcher.

The whole group mutters sounds of relief when they meet. FRANKIE embraces some of the black soldiers, and a few among them give painful pats to BROWN.

The soldiers lift him onto the stretcher and take him to the wagon.

LEBO, accompanied by a few soldiers, stops FRANKIE at the edge of the firelight for a quiet word before she can follow.

LEBO

Mrs. Campbell, my name is Captain Lebo. I'm in charge of tracking down bandits that might still be in the area. I hear tell that the men who attacked you and Major Wham's party were unmasked. Can you verify this?

FRANKIE

Yes, sir. Faces bare as babes'.

LEBO

Sergeant Brown tells me that you're local in these parts. Did you recognize any faces familiar to you?

FRANKIE

They were almost all of them familiar to me. I could put names to them if I weren't so bad for remembering.

LEBO

Other eyewitnesses mentioned these names. Any of them meet up with your recollection?

LEBO extracts a list from a pocket in his uniform and hands it to her.

FRANKIE

Sir, I do not read.

LEBO coughs, embarrassed. He takes back the list and squints at it.

LEBO (CONT'D)

Apologies, ma'am: David Rogers, Gilbert and Wilfred Webb, the Follet brothers...

FRANKIE

Yeah I saw some of them. I saw Webb, the old man Webb, look me straight in the eye. Then the other one says it's going to be a real shame to kill me.

FRANKIE draws her cloak, a tattered, dirty thing over one thin shoulder.

LEBO

Thank you. Marshal Meade will probably want to ask you some more questions when you get back to Tucson.

Something in the darkness catches his eye.

FRANKIE

(murmurs)  
Ok then.

LEBO doesn't say anything. He is preoccupied with a trail of hoof prints that lead into the darkness. FRANKIE moves back to the firelight.

LEBO stalks out into the black.

FADE OUT.

INT. TELEGRAPH ROOM, FORT THOMAS - NIGHT

The telegraph OPERATOR, an uncleanly person in an apron, sits with his feet up on his apparatus, reading "The Arizona Citizen," a broadsheet newspaper. Behind him is the windowed door to his post, frosted with the title 'Telegraph equipment, military use only.'

The door rattles as MAJOR WHAM, a heavysset man with a martial gait, enters in a fury.

WHAM

God damn it man, get the telegraph machine ready! There's been an emergency.

The OPERATOR scrambles with his equipment.

WHAM

Jesus, I don't have time for this. It shouldn't surprise me that my black soldiers are cowardly and incompetent when they're being shot at, but I expect more from a military man with no more to contend with than a direct order.

OPERATOR

I'm sorry sir. Who is the recipient?

WHAM

Colonel Grierson, Department of  
Arizona Los Angeles. Relay the  
following.

The OPERATOR takes down Major WHAM's message on a scrap of  
paper:

WHAM (CONT'D)

Ambushed robbers. Fired upon me  
from a carefully built stone fort  
and in a fight lasting thirty  
minutes eight men out of an escort  
of eleven were wounded and my funds  
amounting to twenty-nine thousand  
dollars were taken. Urgently  
recommend posting men to escape  
routes from Gila Valley into  
Mexico. Pursuit underway here.

WHAM leaves instantaneously, slamming the door behind him.  
The OPERATOR finishes writing the message down, then glares  
after WHAM.

His gaze shifts to the "Arizona Citizen."

EXT. RIVERBED - DAWN

LEBO rides his mount into a sandy basin alongside the Gila  
river, a steady but wide strip of murky water. The trail of  
horse prints he has been following descends into the water  
here. A pair of men, bare to the waist, wade at the edge of  
the river. They slice at the water with rakes, searching for  
something.

One of the workers wades out of the river and, shivering,  
hails him.

WORKER

'Morning officer.

LEBO

Stand. Where you folks from?

WORKER

Pima, a few miles upriver. Do you  
have business with us?

LEBO

I may do. I'm looking for some men  
rid this way not more than six  
hours ago. Is Pima the only  
settlement nearby?

The worker's mouth stiffens.

WORKER

Men of the sort you're looking for  
aren't welcome in Pima, officer.

LEBO spits off the side of his horse.

LEBO

I get the impression you know of  
whom I refer, then.

WORKER

No I do not.

LEBO looks at him hard.

LEBO

State your business here.

WORKER

We are taking care of our own.

LEBO

Meaning what?

WORKER

One of our young, a girl, drowned  
in the river two days ago. We are  
looking for her body.

LEBO appraises the river.

LEBO

You're certainly doing a good job  
covering her tracks.

He dismounts and walks to a heap of debris that the workers  
have scraped out of the river: plants, dirt, rocks, firewood  
from recent campers at the ford, and some emptied tins of  
venison. Standard junk. After a minute, he pulls out a  
tattered bag and frowns at the contents.

Inside is a handful of horseshoe nails and a horseshoe that  
hasn't yet had time to rust.

He returns to the horse tracks he had been following by the  
ford. Holding the horseshoe, he turns his head so that he's  
looking at the hoof prints upside-down.

LEBO

Well, hell.

LEBO climbs back on his mount and, spurring his horse urgently, rides back the way he came.

In the river, the second worker shouts to his friend. He's just hauled something out of the river: the body of a little girl.

INT. INFIRMARY, FORT THOMAS - DAY

Wire frame beds with thin, curled mattresses line the walls of the room. Occupying them are wounded buffalo soldiers, now bandaged and sleeping or passing time with their neighbors. A MEDIC stops occasionally at one bed or another to check a bandage.

Wooden double doors, the only exit to the room, swoop open and back again as Major WHAM barrels through. He casts his gaze from side to side. His chest is puffed. The MEDIC holds a finger to his lips.

WHAM lets out his breath and meets the MEDIC in the center of the hall.

WHAM

(whispers)

What is the status of my men?

MEDIC

They're going to make it.

WHAM

What I meant was - how long until they're fit to travel?

The MEDIC looks at him sidelong.

MEDIC

A handful of them will need hospitalization for a couple of weeks at least.

WHAM

And the rest?

MEDIC

Sir, you're not planning to continue your run without the money?

WHAM

(irritated)

Who said anything about the run?

(MORE)

WHAM (cont'd)

I'm going to find those thieves and bring them to justice before they sneak like ticks into Mexico. They won't get the upper hand again, not even if I have to hunt them down alone.

Outside, a military trumpet announces the arrival of more soldiers at the fort.

WHAM

Finally some news!

EXT. STOCKADE, FORT THOMAS - DAY

A slow-moving train of soldiers and an ambulance pull past the fort's gate - a wall of adobe and ocotillo. Flurries of men relieve the soldiers of their mounts and equipment, trading them for canteens full of water.

BROWN is lifted down from the back of the ambulance in his stretcher. FRANKIE climbs down after him. WHAM's eyes widen.

WHAM

What is that woman doing out of custody?

The soldiers exchange confused glances.

WHAM approaches and accosts corporal MAYS, who is in charge of the detachment.

WHAM

Where is Captain Lebo? This woman is an accomplice to the robbery of me and my men.

MAYS

Sir, he went after those bandits.

WHAM scoffs.

WHAM

(furious)

Leaving me to do the dirty work. Very well... Mrs. Campbell, you are under arrest for assisting outlaws and criminals to waylay a federal paymaster.

FRANKIE

(confused)

Sir, you've got me mistaken for  
some other ne'er do-gooder.

WHAM

Corporal, assist Frankie to lodging  
at the guardhouse.

MAYS nods at two of his privates, who escort FRANKIE away.

Jaw clenched, he continues through the fort's gate. MAYS  
decides to follow him.

EXT. OUTSIDE FORT THOMAS - DAY

Several mules are tethered to stakes at the perimeter of the  
fort. A broken-down conveyance decorated with U.S. Army  
insignia has been abandoned against the wall.

WHAM turns on MAYS just outside the gate.

WHAM

Eight veteran soldiers wounded  
behind cover and that Campbell  
woman in plain sight doesn't get a  
scratch? Those odds seem right to  
you, Corporal?

MAYS

I don't know, sir.

WHAM

With her riding up ahead the whole  
time. I bet she warned those  
robbers we were coming. Does that  
seem likely to you, Corporal?

MAYS

No, sir.

WHAM

I would wager she was in league  
with those bandits from the start.

MAYS

Do you gamble with money, sir?

WHAM is a little confused.

WHAM

Yes, I suppose I do.

MAYS

Maybe you'd like to play cards with the boys some time. We'd love to have someone like you to bet with.

MAYS turns on his heels and returns to the fort. WHAM doesn't know what to make him, but he's still pissed off. In a huff, he circles behind the ruined Army conveyance.

The rear of the conveyance contains a shattered strongbox, its wooden frame busted open around undamaged iron bonds. A chipped axe lies next to it with other articles of evidence: guns, shells, a paperback novel, and several agave stalks from the crime scene. WHAM glares at them.

He lifts the axe and hefts it. Then, angry, he hacks at the strongbox. It doesn't even make a dent.

INT. JAIL CELL, FORT THOMAS - NIGHT

FRANKIE leans against the bars of her cell. Her face is illuminated by an oil lamp in the adjoining hallway--the adobe walls suck up the rest of the light.

The hall echoes with the footsteps of PRIVATE FOX, one of the buffalo soldiers, then cease as he comes to a halt in front of FRANKIE. He's handsomely dressed with a colorful scarf out of place over his shoulders. She smiles at him.

FRANKIE

Look what a mess I'm in.

FOX

You'll not be here long.

FRANKIE

It's easy to be all sunshine when you can see it from where you're standing. You know something I don't know?

FOX

Just that you'll be fine.

He removes his scarf and offers it to her.

FRANKIE

You returning my gift?

FOX

That's right. You said I wear it and I'll be safe from danger, and you was right.

(MORE)

FOX (cont'd)

I was safe when everyone else was  
in danger. Now you need it more  
than I do.

She takes it.

FRANKIE

You're a honey.

She frowns.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

But don't you think this covers the  
bet you lost.

He laughs.

FOX

No, ma'am.

INT. MEADE'S OFFICE - DAY

Local sheriff WHELAN and deputy READ are playing rummy on a lacquered oak table at the end of a sparsely decorated but dirty room, the office of U.S. MARSHAL MEADE. Military portraits, maps of territorial counties, flags, certificates, and medals given to previous Marshals would normally make the space look efficient and businesslike, but the discarded coats, hats, gun belts, etc. of local officers litter the open space and cover some of the memorabilia.

READ is smoking a cigar and the smoke fills the room; he has already had several.

READ

Those twelve niggers should have  
been pulling the wagon, not driving  
it.

WHELAN

Sure.

WHELAN takes a card from the pile in the center of the table and puts one into the nearby discard.

READ

(drawing and discarding)  
They could've given the horses guns  
and they would have done a better  
job.

WHELAN  
 (and so on)  
 Uh huh.

READ  
 Washington keeps sending those sons  
 of bitches down here to give us a  
 bad name.

WHELAN  
 Yes, sir.

READ  
 But I can see we're being cheated.

WHELAN sets down a set of four sixes, two are clubs and two are diamonds.

READ squints at them and purses his lips, but WHELAN points at the U.S. Union flag on the wall (or is it the bottle of whiskey on the desk in front of it?) and draws READ's gaze before he can notice anything wrong.

WHELAN  
 I'd keep my mouth shut if I were  
 you. In front of the Marshal it's  
 'colored folk' to you, and I  
 wouldn't even mention the state.

READ gets up and fetches the bottle from the desk. He puts it on the table in front of WHELAN. Feeling smug, he puts down a set of three jacks and grins.

READ  
 Three jacks.

WHELAN overturns his fifth card.

WHELAN  
 Fine, I've got a king, hand over  
 your jacks.

READ stares at him.

WHELAN (CONT'D)  
 In this game, kings beat jacks.

READ  
 What?

There are footsteps on the wood floor outside.

WHELAN

Ah. Here comes king Meade to put you straight.

READ

Who told you that kings beat jacks?

WHELAN

No one. I cheat.

READ can't say anything because MEADE opens the door and steps in with the Deputy Marshal, DUNAVAN, squinting into the smoke. He is wearing an impeccable Marshal's uniform with golden buttons and has a pugnacious but proud expression. He leaves the door open in his wake and looks about distastefully.

MEADE

I have conferred with Commissioner Hughes about our list of suspects. We agree that we have to tread cautiously in this matter. All of them are residents of Graham County and with one exception live in or near the town of Pima.

READ

Mormons causing trouble. I've heard this joke before.

MEADE nods.

MEADE

One of them isn't Mormon. I've been granted a warrant for his arrest -- name's Bill Beck. You'll know him by his limp if you don't already.

READ

What about the rest?

MEADE

We have to be careful. The other suspects are important in their communities and to the church. We don't want this fight to get messy.

He tosses a sketch of an older man in a top hat onto the table where it mingles with the cards.

MEADE

An eyewitness identified this man,  
Gilbert Webb, at the crime scene.  
He is the mayor of Pima.

READ

Who identified him? One of those  
black buzzards?

MEADE stares hard at him. READ mumbles and breaks his gaze.

MEADE

Sheriff, can you be prepared to  
leave with me and some soldiers  
later tonight? Since the Mormons  
have never been friends of the  
federal government, I need to show  
that I have local support.

WHELAN

The territory of Arizona is no  
place for outlaws, Marshal. If I  
can help cure Graham County of its  
bad reputation, then it would not  
only be my duty but my pleasure to  
assist the government in this case.

MEADE

Well said.

(beat)

There are still at least six more  
unidentified bandits, and some of  
them are likely to be local. I'd  
like to do some investigation while  
we're in Pima to discover the  
identity of the remaining robbers.

(to DUNAVAN and WHELAN)

Handle yourselves carefully in  
Pima, gentlemen. This is a  
volatile situation, and we want to  
keep things cool out there.  
Remember: six more bandits.

LEBO, sweating and dishevelled, enters through the open door.

LEBO

Five, Marshal.

MEADE

(surprised)

Captain.. Report.

LEBO

Long story. I found some trash that was almost certainly left by them at the Gila River ford and a nearby trail that went very near Cunningham's ranch. I got as close as I could without him seeing me.

MEADE

Good work Captain. I want you scope out Cunningham's neighbors in case they have something to say. We'll take care of Cunningham and the others.

LEBO nods wearily and exits.

READ

Um, Marshal? Does a king "beat" a Jack in rummy?

WHELAN looks uncomfortable.

MEADE

Kings always beat jacks.

EXT. OUTSIDE GENERAL STORE - DAY

CYCLONE BILL, an exaggerated, melodramatically drunk cowboy, sits at a wooden table on the porch of the Pima general store with THREE CARD PLAYERS, including MARK CUNNINGHAM, looking out at the street.

Mormon residents go by and in and out of the general store with distasteful looks at the card game and the bottle on the table. BILL alternates between tipping his hats to the Mormons with a wide silly grin and playing the poker game, which by now has accumulated a formidable pile of bank notes and silver coins as bets. BILL's own money is stacked in several small columns next to him; most of it is gold.

CARD PLAYER ONE

...I'll see you.

CARD PLAYER TWO

I'm in.

CYCLONE BILL

(aside to a passing Mormon)

How do you do?

(back to the game)

Ha! I'll raise you five dollars.

He tosses some gold onto the table.

CUNNINGHAM

Fine.

LYMAN FOLLETT marches up the stairs of the general store and stops to smirk at the game.

CYCLONE BILL

Howdy, Lyme. Join in! Surely the toughest horseman in Graham County's got some time for a hand of draw.

LYMAN tips his hat with a bandaged right hand.

LYMAN

...William. Don't you know, gambling's a sin? Besides, my hand's a faster draw than yours any day.

He gestures to his gun belt.

BILL points at LYMAN's wounded hand.

CYCLONE BILL

Even today?

LYMAN

(laughing)  
It's nothing.

CYCLONE BILL

You must be tough if you can herd cattle with nothing... Roundup yesterday go well?

LYMAN

(a little irritated)  
Very well. See you around, Bill.

LYMAN proceeds into the general store.

CYCLONE BILL

(to the CARD PLAYER)  
Well?

His opponent folds.

CARD PLAYER ONE

I guess I'll see you in hell.

HIRAM WEECH, the owner of the general store, stomps out from inside.

WEECH

Bill, I don't know what you said to Lyme, but if you don't stop speaking dirty to my customers I'm going to kick you off my porch.

CYCLONE BILL

Aw, Hiram, take it easy. Have a drink.

CYCLONE BILL offers WEECH the bottle from the table. WEECH scowls.

CYCLONE BILL (CONT'D)

Oh, right.

WEECH stomps back into the general store.

CUNNINGHAM

(shouting after him)  
And bring me some more gold to change! I'm going to win this one!

They start the game again.

CARD PLAYER TWO

I'm in.

CUNNINGHAM

Fine.

They play their cards. CYCLONE BILL slams down his hand with a YIPEE!. With three jacks, his is the winning hand. The other players mutter to themselves as BILL collects the great pile of money in the middle of the table.

CARD PLAYER ONE gets up, disgusted, and bumps into someone as he steps down the stairs. GILBERT WEBB, Pima mayor and respected local businessman and landowner, brushes off his side and proceeds past the man up the stairs.

CYCLONE BILL

Ah, Mr. Webb! It's good to see you. How are the wives?

GILBERT

(coldly)  
Cyclone Bill Beck, disturbing the peace in your usual fragrant manner. What's your business in Pima this time?

CYCLONE BILL

Ain't no where knows a better time  
than Pima.

He laughs uproariously.

HIRAM WEECH

(from inside the store)  
I told you, Bill, that I didn't  
want you causing trouble.

He emerges from the store with a shotgun.

WEECH

Now get off my - Oh! Hello Mr.  
Webb. What can I do for you?

GILBERT

Your sister tells me you've been  
having trouble with business. I've  
come to offer you some support.

WEECH

That would be a blessing, mayor,  
but I'm not sure if I can give  
anything in return.

GILBERT removes a pouch and presents it to WEECH.

GILBERT

We take care of our own. One of  
these days you'll see an  
opportunity to do something for me.  
Remember this.

WEECH takes his money. He looks inside the pouch and his  
eyes widen.

WEECH

This will cover the main of it. As  
for the rest...

He turns to BILL and brandishes his shotgun.

WEECH (CONT'D)

If you think a cyclone is going to  
save you from this then at least I  
can put your stupidity down to  
drink. Get off my porch!

CYCLONE BILL and the other card players start up from the  
table quickly, leaving the cards on the table. CARD PLAYER  
TWO runs off and CYCLONE BILL limps a profound, pride-injured  
limp down the stairs with CUNNINGHAM at his side.

U.S. MARSHAL MEADE

Nice shotgun you've got there, Mr. Weech.

MEADE, WHELAN, and DUNAVAN ride up to the general store on horseback. WEECH tries to make himself look meek.

WHELAN

Marcus Cunningham, William Beck, you are under arrest for the robbery of Joseph Wham, U.S. Federal Paymaster.

CUNNINGHAM allows WHELAN and DUNAVAN to tie his hands behind his back with a smirk. He's clearly been through this before. BILL faints.

MEADE

Pardon us, mayor, but we have warrants for the arrest of several suspects of the robbery of U.S. Paymaster Joseph Wham and the wounding of eight soldiers in the escort. We don't want any trouble for the town of Pima, but we do suspect that six local residents were party to the robbery and would anticipate your cooperation in investigating them.

GILBERT

We have nothing to hide here in Pima, marshal. The U.S. Army has always felt comfortable investigating members of our community; I do not see why it should not now. I have every confidence that you will find the men you are looking for, that they will be put in jail and that the rest of the men you seek will be found one way or another.

MEADE

(shrewdly)

Thank you. If either of you hear any information, know that there is a reward for it, and that we will be in town for the next few days.

GILBERT

Of course. But Marshal? I care a great deal about these people. I would not have them disturbed.

MEADE stares at GILBERT.

MEADE  
(to DUNAVAN about BILL)  
Clean this mess up, will you?

The three jacks lie boldly on the table. There is a scrape of spurs on the ground as CYCLONE BILL is loaded onto a horse. CUNNINGHAM complains about the smell as he is loaded behind him. There is a thud of hooves as the lawmen ride off with their prisoners. The screen door of the general store bangs shut.

There is a moment of silence before it creaks open again and booted footsteps echo on the wooden porch. A right HAND reaches down and picks up the Jack of Diamonds, and a moment later, heavy FOOTSTEPS echo down the stairs and into the street.

EXT. PIMA STREET - DAY

A "Reward!" poster is nailed to the side of a building along a dusty, quiet Pima street. A RESIDENT exits the building and pauses to look at it. It reads, "I am authorized by Hon. W.H.H. Miller, Attorney General, U.S. To offer a reward of [in enormous print] \$500 for the arrest and conviction of EACH of the parties who robbed Major J.W. Wham, Paymaster U.S.A. on May 11th, at a point about 6 miles from Cedar Springs and 15 miles from Fort Thomas, Graham County, Arizona." It is signed, "W.K. Meade, U.S. Marshal for the District of Arizona."

A couple of coins click together as the RESIDENT fishes in his pocket idly. The booted footsteps from the general store approach and stop very close.

RESIDENT  
Howdy, partner. In light of recent events, perhaps you could spare some change for a down-and-out business person.

The click of coins in the RESIDENT's pockets suddenly becomes a lively jangle.

RESIDENT (cont'd)  
God bless you. May he give you wisdom and strength to perform your labors.

INT. HOLLADAY RANCH HOUSE - DAY

HARRIET Holladay, a tall woman in plain dress, tidies up her kitchen, part of a well-worn frontiersman's home that has been no stranger to rough treatment but neither to careful attention.

Someone knocks at the door. HARRIET tidies her hair and opens it to Capt. LEBO.

LEBO

Ma'am.

HARRIET

How do you do, officer?

LEBO

Is the owner of this ranch present?

HARRIET

My husband Wiley should be returning from the farm any minute now, but if you're here about the robbery, I can answer better than him.

LEBO

How do you mean?

HARRIET

He had a long day yesterday at the farm. Why don't you come in? You look famished and I've got some meat in the larder.

LEBO

Thank you, ma'am.

LEBO takes a place at the table.

HARRIET

(calling into the house)  
Eliza?

A smaller woman, under twenty, with similar features and dress enters.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

Is Colin about? I need someone to fetch some tins from the larder.

ELIZA

I'll do it. You want the venison?

HARRIET

Thanks.

ELIZA opens the front door and closes it softly behind her. Harriet turns back to LEBO.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

I heard gun shots but didn't think twice at first. I thought it was cowboys celebrating the cattle round-up. About twenty minutes later I saw Frankie Campbell's horse bolt into our yard. Worried about her, I saddled up with some supplies and rode down there.

LEBO

Did you see any of the assailants?

HARRIET

I got there after they left - about six thirty. I was relieved to find that Frankie was ok, but I heard all about what happened and thought the least I could do was get her some bandages for that wounded fellow. Then I rode back here to keep an eye on things.

The door swings open, admitting ELIZA, carrying a couple tins of meat, and WILEY HOLLADAY, dusty and tired. WILEY looks nervous to see LEBO.

WILEY

My wife told me we had a visitor.

LEBO spies the ring on ELIZA's finger.

LEBO

Yes, both of your... both of them have been very accommodating.

WILEY

Then they've done more than enough.

(to Eliza and Harriet)

Why don't you two leave us to talk about men's business?

With a glance at LEBO, they find other places to be.

WILEY produces a pocketknife from one of his pockets and begins goring out one of the tins. LEBO wastes no time, either:

LEBO

My name is Captain Lebo. I'm in charge of tracking down the bandits that assaulted a federal paymaster just a few miles from here. Do you know anything about this?

WILEY

My wife told me what happened.

LEBO

So you were not in the area?

He hesitates.

WILEY

No. I was working at the farm we run outside Pima.

WILEY puts the gored tin in front of LEBO. LEBO frowns at it; it reminds him of something.

LEBO

Do you cross the river ford about twelve miles northeast of here to get to your farm?

WILEY

No, sir. We travel along the river.

LEBO nods.

LEBO

That's all I wanted to know. Thank you, Mr. Halloway.

WILEY shows him to the door. They shake hands and LEBO departs, leaving the venison.

EXT. THE HOLLADAY RANCH - DAY

The ranch house door closes behind LEBO.

His horse is tied nearby, next to the horse WILEY just arrived on. It hasn't yet been unsaddled, and farming tools still hang from it: a shovel still caked in mud, a hoe, a rake, and some bags that probably carry fertilizer or seeds. LEBO frowns at them. He was sure WILEY was lying.

He lifts one of the horse's legs and examines the horse shoe: right side up.

EXT. DOORSTEP - DAY

MARSHAL MEADE is in the doorway of a Pima resident's home asking questions to a young Mormon man, THOMAS LAMB. Further out in the street WHELAN is chatting amiably with a PASSERBY.

LAMB

Yeah, sure I saw him. Around one.  
He came by and lent me some money.

MEADE

(his interest piqued)  
How much money?

LAMB

Just twenty dollars. It's been hard since I hurt my arm at the mill. I've been out of work since then - April 14th, ask anyone - Mr. Webb's a good man.

MEADE

Yes, he does seem to be important around here.

MEADE disengages from LAMB with some thanks and stops the RESIDENT, who has just appeared strolling down the street, to ask more questions. WHELAN is just finishing questioning a passerby in the street.

WHELAN

You didn't happen to spy Mr. Gilbert Webb around town last Saturday?

PASSERBY

Matter of fact I did. He stopped up there at Lamb's house, to borrow some money, he told me.

WHELAN

(his interest piqued)  
Money? You chance upon the figure of this exchange?

PASSERBY

No sir. A handful of notes, no more.

WHELAN

(disappointed)  
Thanks so much for your time.

The sheriff and the Marshal meet up after they've both finished.

WHELAN

Webb stopped up here at Lamb's,  
early afternoon some say.

MEADE

(irritable)  
Story's the same with mine.  
There's nothing here. We'd best be  
moving along.

They move off together down the street.

EXT. ANOTHER PIMA STREET - DAY

A laughing KID runs down the street past various locals, brandishing a six-shooter that clicks ineffectually in his hand as he squeezes the trigger over and over again, pretending to be a cowboy or a bandit. He laughs with delight and emulates the sound effect of the gun, fantasizing about a daring robbery or a fight with Indians.

Not paying attention, he runs into the legs of a tall man in his twenties, WILFRED, who stares down at him with a puzzled expression. The KID points his gun up at WILFRED.

KID

Blam!

WILFRED

(with a distinctive, rapid-  
fire staccato voice)  
Where'd you get that gun, son?

KID

(irritated that he's been  
distracted from his game)  
None of your business.

The KID turns to go but WILFRED grabs the gun and won't let go.

WILFRED

Where'd you get that gun?

KID

I found it. Me and my friend Joey,  
we found it down by the river this  
morning. Got washed up, I think.

WILFRED

Give it here, it's mine.

KID

No it's not. I found it.

WILFRED

Look here, it's got my name on it.  
Now give it to me.

Sure enough, his name is engraved on the handle.

The KID struggles with WILFRED for a moment more, then lets go and goes running off. WILFRED stares after him, worried.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

LESLIE, a young man not yet out of his teens, is finishing up a lesson to some kids in a church classroom. Prominently featured on the blackboard is a paragraph titled, "Next Week, Article 12" that reads "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law."

LESLIE

Joseph Smith writes that "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as a man's." They must be sustained in manners that are tangible, like a man's. Would they were among us now, walking side by side in the street, bestowing their blessings upon each of your pretty heads, even you Mabry...

The children laugh.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

Would they were here, as they might be, they would feast on barley as we do, and when they were without barley, they would be hungry as we are.

He looks seriously at the children.

LESLIE (CONT'D)

But the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit.

(MORE)

LESLIE (CONT'D)

Were it not so, the Holy Ghost  
could not dwell in us. It dwells  
in us all, and needs no sustenance  
but our faith.

GILBERT and WILFRED quietly open the door and enter to see him finish his lecture. With a glance at them, LESLIE wraps up his lecture. He pulls a bag of seeds from under his desk and scatters them on the surface.

LESLIE

Take a handful of these seeds,  
children, which the Heavenly Father  
provides and does consume. Plant  
them with your families, then pray  
that what we are provided tomorrow  
shall be greater than what we have  
been provided today. If it shall,  
then it shall be because of our  
good worth and faith in Him.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CHURCH - SUNSET

WILFRED, GILBERT, and LESLIE are walking together away from the church. LESLIE wears a worried expression.

LESLIE

Will they ever let you back in  
again?

GILBERT reaches out and puts his hands on the shoulders of his sons.

GILBERT

There are times, son, when even the  
church loses its way. I'm still a  
part of this town and I'm still a  
warden here. They'll have me back  
when they stop doubting that I was  
right. And they will stop  
doubting, they always do. My sons,  
if you cannot have faith in me,  
your father, then have faith in  
God, our Lord.

The three walk out into the town, holding each other as the sun slips away behind its rooftops. They survey MEADE and his gang riding manically to and from houses in the street, but with detachment. Whispers fill the streets.

FADE OUT.

<END OF EXCERPT>